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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 000703

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/21/2018
TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: BRV SLAPS NAS-FUNDED NGO AFTER AMBASSADOR ATTENDS
EVENT IN POOR CARACAS NEIGHBORHOOD

Classified By: Daniel Lawton, Acting Political Counselor,
Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: The BRV stripped NGO Prevencion Alternativa of the requisite certification to work in the area of demand reduction after the Ambassador attended a May 17 ceremony to honor participants in a series of NAS-funded workshops in the economically depressed neighborhood of Petare. In his remarks, the Ambassador noted the increase of drug trafficking through Venezuela and called for increased international cooperation in the war on drugs. Minister of Justice and Interior Ramon Rodriguez Chacin told the media that the Ambassador's "complaint" that Venezuela was not doing its part in the war on drugs was a deliberate provocation. The BRV's heavy-handed response once more illustrates its hyper-sensitivity to any Embassy effort to communicate with those sectors of Venezuela society that Chavez sees as his base. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) The Ambassador attended a small May ceremony at the Torre Fuerte Evangelical church to honor 115 congregation members who had completed a series of demand reduction workshops funded by NAS. The church is located in the sprawling district of Petare, an area which encompasses most of eastern Caracas and includes many lower income neighborhoods. In his media covered remarks, the Ambassador congratulated the workshop participants, noted that drug traffickers are increasingly shipping their product through Venezuela, described the international nature of narcotics trafficking, and emphasized that only through coordinated international efforts could the war on narcotics traffickers be waged successfully.

¶3. (C) The visit to Petare is part of a larger mission strategy to convince Venezuelans that 1) drug trafficking is a problem and 2) that the USG is ready and willing to cooperate with Venezuela in the war on drugs. This effort most recently included an Ambassadorial op-ed piece and a similar event and remarks in the borough of El Hatillo.

¶4. (SBU) The event in Petare grew out of a direct request from the Torre Fuerte Protestant congregation to NAS for demand reduction assistance. NAS contracted NGO Prevencion Alternativa to organize and carry out a series of workshops. The BRV requires that all demand reduction training material be vetted by the National Anti-drug Office (ONA) and administered by an ONA-certified NGO. Prevencion Alternativa was selected specifically because it is among the very few NGO's to have acquired ONA certification. Moreover, the NGO's training materials had already been approved by ONA.

15. (SBU) On May 20, Prevencion Alternativa received a letter from ONA dated May 19 in which it was informing the NGO that its certification had been revoked for having carried out an unapproved project. Prevencion Alternativa directors assure us that the material they used in the Petare workshops was presented to and approved by ONA in November 2007. That same day, in the Ambassador's meeting with the Foreign Minister, Nicolas Maduro raised the Ambassador's remarks in Petare, to which the Ambassador responded that he would be happy to supply a copy. Minister of Justice and Interior Ramon Rodriguez Chacin, however, told the media, referring the Ambassador's May 17 remarks, that the Ambassador's "complaint" that the BRV "was not doing its part in the war on drugs" was deliberate provocation.

16. (C) Comment: The Ambassador indicated in Petare that U.S. wanted to renew cooperation with Venezuela, not that the BRV wasn't doing enough. The real issue was not the Ambassador's remarks, but the fact that the Embassy was communicating with an economically disadvantaged sector of Venezuela society. Petare is a particularly sore point for Chavez because, despite being economically depressed and the beneficiary of many BRV social programs, it voted against his constitutional reform package in December 2007. End Comment.

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